

THE MAGAZINE OF  
AMERICAN VETERANS

SUMMER 1991

THE NATIONAL  
**AMVET**

**POW/MIA**

**THE  
QUEST  
FOR  
ANSWERS**

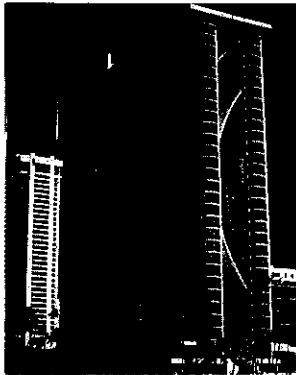
## Go to the Wall.

And be proud of it, because you built it. When you join AMVETS this winter in Hawaii to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, be sure to visit the Vermont marble Wall of Names acquired and dedicated by AMVETS aboard the U.S.S. *Arizona* honoring the 1,177 who died defending her—including the 1,102 still entombed in her hull. AMVETS was born as a result of the war that started that day, and you will unite with other AMVETS and veterans observing the most significant event in the history of the organization.

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Make plans now for your special visit to the wall and help unfurl the AMVETS colors to honor all who fought and died in the war.

# THE NATIONAL AMVET

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**Cover:** Haunting questions persist concerning the fate of Americans missing in Southeast Asia since the end of the Vietnam War. The search for answers goes on with clear indications that the Vietnamese know more than they are telling. *Photo by Day Walters.*

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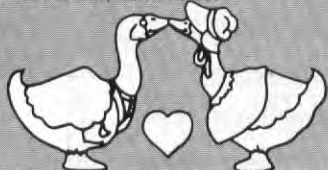


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To order a set, just return this notice with your name and address and a check for \$7.99 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling, and we will send you this exclusive set of "100 Iron-On Transfer Patterns" right away. Or, for only \$9.99 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling, you can get both the special transfer collection and an extra 100 full-size, large transfer patterns with a variety of additional pattern ideas!

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**OFFER EXPIRES AUGUST 24, 1991**

All orders mailed by August 24, 1991, will receive 50 special transfer patterns as a free gift, guaranteed. Order right away!

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**WHY ARE WE PRACTICALLY  
"GIVING AWAY"**

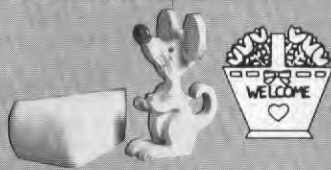
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PATTERNS FOR  
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(By Frank K. Wood)

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- Curvy curios, charming country cats.
- Sturdy shelves, shadowboxes, showy plaques.
- Victorian ladies and stylish gents.
- Rack up your spices, spice up your den.
- Holders for candles, napkins and canes.
- Folk art, Shaker art, modern art, too.
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- Doorstop decorations, welcome signs.
- Whizzing whirligigs, models of planes.
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- Dancing bear, prancing pony, soaring eagle.
- Circus animals and barnyard critters.
- Childhood favorites, Noah and the Ark.
- And much, much more.



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THESE LITTLE  
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SECRETS DOCTORS  
NEVER TELL YOU.  
PLUS, FIVE FOODS  
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NEW NATURAL HEALING SECRETS REVEALED! 420 WAYS TO PERFECT HEALTH.

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FC&A, a Peachtree City, Georgia, publisher, announced today the release of a new book for the general public, "New Natural Healing Encyclopedia."

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- ▶ Is marriage good for your health? The surprising findings!
- ▶ Losing your memory? Scared it's senility? It could just be a shortage of this single nutrient!
- ▶ The best ulcer healer? Look in your medicine cabinet for the pink remedy!
- ▶ Depressed? This one nutrient could "cure" you!
- ▶ A powerful nutrient that clobbers cancer cells!
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- ▶ Spicy help for arthritis pain!
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"We're so positive that one of these health secrets will work for you that we'll send you a free gift just for trying them."

heart!

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- ▶ Don't poison yourself with potatoes!
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- ▶ Feeling bad is NOT a symptom of old age! Here's what's normal and what's not!
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- ▶ Scientific study proves prayer helps heal.
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- ▶ Eat your way out of breast cancer risk? Here's how!
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Save! Return this notice with \$11.98 plus \$2.00 for two books. (No extra shipping and handling charges.)

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# COMMANDER'S VIEW



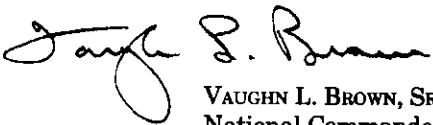
Promote world peace. Preserve the American way of life. Help the veteran help himself. These are our organizational goals going back to 1944. As your national commander, I have been able to see problems overcome and challenges met in order to reach these goals. In this past year, I have traveled extensively throughout this nation and I've seen the quality of work being done by our departments and posts. The methods may have been different but the outcome was always the same; you were working hard to help others and to improve your communities.

It is one of the more gratifying aspects of my position to be able to see these contributions. Membership, for example, was up 1,272 more as of July 1 than 1990's year-end total. The NSOs have also done a great job this year—especially with VAVS. In the field, program development in the areas of veteran and community service is exceptional. And the support you have given to our veterans of Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM is greatly appreciated, not only by AMVETS, but also by all those you have touched with your generosity. By writing letters, sending care packages, adopting platoons and hosting or attending support rallies, you showed these veterans that AMVETS and America stand behind them.

Through hard work, we are making some real headway in veterans service. Take the National Victory Celebration

in Washington, D.C., on June 8—when I joined with leaders of other congressionally chartered veterans organizations to honor the brave men and women of Operation DESERT STORM (pages 22-23). These 20 organizations formed the coalition that sponsored the parade. This was just one of the many instances where people have recognized what an important contribution veterans are making in this country.

I've noticed something else in my travels, too. We are proud of who we are and what we've done on our journey so far. We take pride in our service as veterans and pride in our service to veterans. And we should be proud of the accomplishments we have made this far since they are the tools we use in achieving our organizational goals. You have definitely been "serving with pride." Please continue in your devotion to AMVETS and America's veterans.

  
VAUGHN L. BROWN, SR.  
National Commander

## Small Company's New Golf Ball Flies Too Far; Could Obsolete Many Golf Courses

Pro Hits 400-Yard Tee Shots During Test Round

Want To Shoot An Eagle or Two?

By Mike Henson

MERIDEN, CT — A small golf company in Connecticut has created a new, super ball that flies like a U-2, putts with the steady roll of a cue ball and bites the green on approach shots like a dropped cat. But don't look for it on weekend TV. Long-hitting pros could make a joke out of some of golf's finest courses with it. One pro who tested the ball drove it 400 yards, reaching the green on all but the longest par-fours. Scientific tests by an independent lab using a hitting machine prove the ball out-distances major brands dramatically.

The ball's extraordinary distance comes partly from a revolutionary new dimple design that keeps the ball aloft longer. But there's also a secret change in the core that makes it rise faster off the clubhead. Another change reduces air drag. The result is a ball that gains altitude quickly, then sails like a glider. None of the changes is noticeable in the ball itself.

Despite this extraordinary performance the company has a problem. A spokesman put it this way: "In golf you need endorsements and TV publicity. This is what gets you in the pro shops and stores where 95% of all golf products are sold. Unless the pros use your ball on TV, you're virtually locked out of these outlets.

TV advertising is too expensive to buy on your own, at least for us.

"Now, you've seen how far this ball can fly. Can you imagine a pro using it on TV and eagle-ing par-fours? It would turn the course into a par-three, and real men don't play par-three's. This new fly-power forces us to sell it without relying on pros or pro-shops. One way is to sell it direct from our plant. That way we can keep the name printed on the ball a secret that only a buyer would know. There's more to golf than tournaments, you know."

The company guarantees a golfer a prompt refund if the new ball doesn't cut five to ten strokes off his or her average score. Simply return the balls — new or used — to the address below. "No one else would dare do that," boasted the company's director.

If you would like an eagle or two, here's your best chance yet. Write your name and address and "Code Name S" (the ball's R&D name) on a piece of paper and send it along with a check (or your credit card number and expiration date) to National Golf Center (Dept. S-98), 500 S. Broad St., Meriden, CT 06450. Or phone 203-238-2712, 8-8 Eastern time. No P.O. boxes, all shipments are UPS. One dozen "S" balls cost \$24.95 (plus \$3.00 shipping & handling), two to five dozen are only \$22.00 each, six dozen are only \$109.00. You save \$55.70 ordering six. Shipping is free on two or more dozen. Specify white or Hi-Vision yellow.

# WHERE ARE THEY?



*For the families of those missing in Southeast Asia, the wait goes on amid agonizingly slow progress in determining the fate of their loved ones. On the pages that follow, The National AMVET reveals the efforts now underway to resolve the POW / MIA issue.*

*The importance of  
the POW/MIA issue  
to Americans  
prompts a return  
to Vietnam*

# FULFILLING AN OBLIGATION



In April, I traveled to Vietnam for the second time since the United States ended its military involvement in that troubled country. In meetings with senior officials there I discussed a range of issues affecting U.S./Vietnam relations—among them a political settlement of the Cambodian conflict, the terms and prospects for normalization of our relations with Vietnam and political prisoners in Vietnam.

The principle subject I wished to address with Vietnamese leaders was the fullest possible accounting of those Americans who are still listed as missing in action or as prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. I believe there has been some progress in resolving this issue in recent months. There remain, however, more than 2,000 Americans unaccounted for as a result of the Vietnam War. Many in the United States believe that a number of these men are still alive and being held against their will in Vietnam.

Much greater progress is necessary before we can say with any confidence that the fullest possible accounting for our POW/MIAs has been. Many Americans continue to view this issue as the single greatest impediment to improved relations with Vietnam. Accordingly, I believed that I had an obligation to impress on the Vietnamese the singular importance of this issue to the American people.

Evidence exists to suggest that Vietnam is warehousing the remains of many U.S. servicemen. In my talks with Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, I argued that the best way to advance toward resolution of this issue would be for Vietnam to repatriate all American remains and all living Americans who may be in the custody of the Vietnamese people. Thach responded that there were no Americans being held against their

will in Vietnam and that his government was not holding American remains.

Given the increase in reports contradicting Thach's denials, I talked at length with him about establishing an American POW/MIA office in Hanoi to facilitate greater cooperation between our two governments on these investigations. In addition to improving cooperation in joint field investigations and research of Vietnamese war archives, I believe that such an office should serve as a liaison between the families of POW/MIAs and the Vietnamese government so that the families can make arrangements with Hanoi to investigate the fates of their relatives for themselves on their own.

Thach assured me that he supported the office and endorsed my suggestions for its official responsibilities. He promised me that Vietnam would meet all U.S. conditions for establishing the office. Shortly after my trip, Thach and Gen. John Vessey jointly announced an agreement to establish the office. Should the office be allowed to function in the capacity I have described, I believe it would facilitate progress toward resolving many remaining questions about American POW/MIAs. General Vessey deserves our deepest gratitude for his efforts to affect progress on what should be the nation's highest priority.

We have by no means reached the stage in our accounting of POW/MIAs where we should relinquish all of our tools for persuading Vietnam to make greater progress. I am convinced that lifting the trade embargo now would unnecessarily limit our ability to compel further cooperation from the Vietnamese in this and other humanitarian issues.

Moreover, considerable controversy has recently arisen over the process by which the U.S. government seeks and analyzes information on our POW/MIAs. Col. Millard Peck, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency office charged with this responsibility, has made serious accusations that POW/MIAs are no longer assigned the highest national priority. Recent reports and publications have endorsed his argument, and his allegations deserve serious examination. The time has come for the process to be more open to the public so that Congress and the American people can judge for themselves whether it is functioning correctly. I recently introduced legislation, S. 1270, that would require the government to disclose information it has collected on POW/MIAs—including live-sighting reports of Americans in Southeast Asia.

I feel strongly that the imperatives of national security, family privacy and the public's need to know must be reconciled in any legislation directing the disclosure of classified

by John McCain

information. My bill contains exceptions to disclosure that would permit the president to withhold any information that compromises our security or the lives of any living POW/MIAs were it released and would require the families of POW/MIAs to consent to releasing information about their relatives.

Questions still linger that understandably leave most of us unsatisfied with the painfully slow pace in accounting for our POW/MIAs, we must not abandon our efforts. If anything, we should redouble them, at home and in Southeast Asia. This is our solemn obligation to those Americans who bravely served their country in a distant land and never returned. And we owe as much to their families. If anything deserves to be a matter of the highest national priority, this issue does. ☆

*Senator McCain (R-AZ) is the ranking minority member of the Manpower and Personnel Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Armed Forces Committee.*



*A statue in Hanoi commemorates when the author, shown with Sen. Phil Gramm, was shot down in 1967. Below, he meets with a Vietnamese foreign ministry official during his recent visit.*





by Lt. Col. Joe Harvey

For the past 28 years, a humanitarian task force of men and women from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines has had but one mission—to resolve the cases of American servicemen missing as a result of the Vietnam war. Headquartered at Barbers Point Naval Air Station in Hawaii, the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, or JCRC as it is commonly called, is the only organization in the Department of Defense exclusively dedicated to this mission.

When the JCRC was formed in 1973, its principal objective was recovering the remains of MIAs in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Very quickly, however, the center's role changed as the repatriation of significantly fewer American prisoners of war from North Vietnam and Laos than had been expected raised the possi-

bility that the Vietnamese and Laotian communists had chosen to hold Americans captive despite the peace agreement. Field operations to recover remains—which had been very limited from the start—ended altogether when the noncommunist governments of Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam fell in 1975.

Between 1975 and 1981, the JCRC staff focused their efforts on analyzing MIA operational loss records gathered from the armed services, building a computer data base, and gathering new information about missing Americans from refugees fleeing the communist regimes of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. By the end of the seventies, JCRC interviewers—fluent in Southeast Asian languages—were working in refugee camps in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau and Thailand, collecting more

*At the JCRC, dedicated efforts to account for the missing leave—*

## **NO STONE UNTURNED**



*A joint U.S. and Lao recovery team examines the wreckage of a RF-8 aircraft downed in Savannakhet Province in southern Laos.*



*JCRC negotiators, headed by the author (third from top left), participate in a POW/MIA technical meeting with their Vietnamese counterparts in Hanoi.*

than 1,000 reports annually about captured or missing Americans.

Other JCRC staffers analyzed these reports and assembled case files that tended to substantiate what many U.S. observers already suspected: that the Vietnamese government knew about the loss of many MIAs. One particularly significant report—judged truthful by the U.S. government—alleged that Vietnam had collected and was holding more than 400 American remains.

In 1981 the Reagan administration assigned top priority to resolving the Vietnam POW/MIA issue. The development of regular, technical-level discussions between the JCRC and the Vietnamese government became an important initial goal. The first meeting under this program was conducted in late May 1981. At the session, the Vietnamese announced they had recovered the remains of three Americans. The circumstances of these cases clearly demonstrated that Vietnam had long known of the whereabouts of these remains. One of the men, Lt. Cmdr. Ronald Dodge, for example, had been photographed shortly after his capture and the picture appeared on the cover of *Paris Match* magazine.

This incident, followed by a study of all repatriations conducted since the end of the war, shaped the JCRC negotiation strategy for the next several years. The center selected cases that clearly revealed official Vietnamese knowledge of the loss of these individuals. Yet it was extremely important to foster a dialogue without recriminations. Therefore, the goal was to direct Vietnamese attention toward cases that they could resolve and not to find fault for past actions. This brought some

positive results, but the Vietnamese continued to schedule large-scale repatriations of remains in a manner meant to dramatize their own diplomatic agenda and political goals.

Between 1983 and 1985, JCRC negotiators met their Vietnamese counterparts with greater frequency, achieving a more productive dialogue. In 1985 the Vietnamese announced their intent to resolve the issue in 2 years. That August they repatriated the remains of 24 men—apparently to demonstrate a new spirit of cooperation. Later the same year, the JCRC was permitted to conduct the first recovery effort from a crash site in Vietnam since the end of the war.

The 2-year plan, however, never seemed to get off the ground. In early 1986, following the Sixth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist party, the Vietnamese pulled back from their earlier cooperative stance.

In February 1987, President Reagan appointed General John J. Vessey, Jr., U.S. Army (Ret.), a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as his personal emissary to Vietnam for POW/MIA matters to get the work with Vietnam back on track. General Vessey led a mission to Vietnam in July 1987. In his discussions with Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, Vessey emphasized the widespread belief that the Vietnamese government still held American servicemen prisoners. Vessey directed the foreign minister's attention to a group of cases that clearly showed evidence of Vietnamese knowledge.

These cases—which the United States labeled *discrepancy cases*—illuminated the live-sighting question, involving men either known to have been held prisoner or those whose

*continued on page 21*

*We will do everything that a government can to recover the missing, and if we discover proof of captivity, we will take action to bring our men home.*

—George Bush

*Unraveling the whereabouts of more than 2,000 Americans missing in Southeast Asia continues to be—*



## A WORLDWIDE COMMITMENT



Recently, there have been reports in the print and broadcast media suggesting that the U.S. Government is not vigorously pursuing resolution of the POW/MIA issue. Some reports have even suggested that the current administration, as well as those in the past, have engaged in a conspiracy or cover-up to hide the facts from the American people. Such charges are without foundation. The Department of Defense is working diligently to achieve the fullest possible account of those still missing in action in Southeast Asia.

Achieving this account is a matter of highest national priority, not empty rhetoric. Around the world everyday, hundreds of people—both military and civilian—work fulltime to attain this goal. Every individual working on the issue fully recognizes its importance to the families of those who remain missing. Despite our commitment and efforts, progress has been slow.

### **Live-Sighting Reports**

Our highest priority—resolving the prisoner issue—has been at the forefront of negotiations and the intelligence effort. Government authorities in Indochinese countries deny that they are still holding American prisoners; however, their denials have not deterred the United States from directly pursuing the prisoner issue at policy and technical levels. Although we have been unable to prove that Americans are still being detained against their will, the information available to us precludes ruling out that possibility. Based on the assumption

that at least some Americans are still held captive, investigations into live-sighting reports will continue to receive necessary priority and resources. Should any report prove true, we will take appropriate action to ensure the return of those involved.

### **Vietnam**

Recognizing that progress has not been as rapid as all Americans, including myself, would desire, it is important to understand that we have made significant inroads toward resolving the POW/MIA issue. Gen. John Vessey has continued as special presidential emissary to Hanoi for POW/MIA affairs since his appointment in 1987 (page 9). Agreements reached by General Vessey and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Thach have increased cooperation to resolve POW/MIA questions and other humanitarian issues.

Specifically, since September 1988, U.S. and Vietnamese personnel have conducted 13 joint investigations in Vietnam aimed at resolving discrepancy cases involving individuals known to have been captured in combat or to have survived aircraft loss or shootdown. These cases lead to the hundreds about which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam should have knowledge. During this same period, Vietnam turned over the remains of 123 Americans previously listed as missing in action. Our technical specialists spent more than 100 days in Vietnam during 1989 and a comparable period of time in 1990. These activities are continuing in 1991.

by Carl W. Ford

The July opening of a temporary United States POW/MIA office in Hanoi could improve accounting efforts if the Vietnamese government decides to get more serious. If permitted, the experts assigned to this office will investigate live-sighting reports, examine Vietnamese wartime records and archives, facilitate forensic review and repatriation of remains unilaterally recovered by the Vietnamese and conduct advance planning for increased joint field activity. Rapid investigation of live-sighting reports and analysis of the results is our highest priority; however, unilateral actions of the Vietnamese, access to wartime records, and expanded field activity are central to resolving the prisoner question.

In early April 1991, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Solomon presented to Vietnam's Ambassador to the United Nations Le Mai, a "roadmap" of the pace and scope through which bilateral U.S.-Vietnam relations would develop in the context of a Cambodian settlement. The POW/MIA issue is prominent throughout this "roadmap." The pace and scope of the bilateral normalization process will be directly affected by the seriousness of Vietnam's cooperation on the POW/MIA issue, as well as on other humanitarian concerns. Though public statements from Hanoi initially were critical of the approach, the Vietnamese have neither formally accepted nor rejected it.

### Laos

Since 1985, productive surveys and excavations of crash sites have steadily increased in Laos while agreements early this year between that country and the United States have resulted in an expanded plan of year-round POW/MIA activities. A long-sought U.S. objective began this year; joint investigations were made into the fates of Americans last known to have been alive under the control of the Pathet Lao. Joint surveys and recoveries of grave sites are scheduled throughout the country as are expanded crash site surveys and excavations. The Pathet Lao also agreed to consult directly with Hanoi to resolve cases of Americans lost in areas of Laos where Vietnamese forces were deployed during the war. Of the 528 Americans unaccounted for in Laos, 85 percent were lost in such areas.

### Cambodia

Despite numerous U.S. appeals for cooperation on a humanitarian basis and public statements from Cambodian officials that they possessed American remains, a very limited response has been forthcoming from the Heng Samrin regime in Phnom Penh. In July 1990, a U.S. technical forensic team examined 28

sets of remains in Phnom Penh. It determined that all but six were the remains of indigenous Southeast Asians. Currently, 83 Americans remain unaccounted for in Cambodia; yet again, nearly 85 percent were lost in areas controlled at that time by the Vietnamese.

Are we satisfied with our progress in resolving the POW/MIA issue? Most assuredly not; however, the rate of progress is directly proportional to the degree of cooperation coming out of the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The answers to the fate of the 2,273 Americans missing in Southeast Asia lie in those countries, primarily with the government of Vietnam. Fully committed, we are dedicating all our resources to achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing in Southeast Asia. But until Hanoi is convinced that resolution of the POW/MIA issue is in their national interest and the Vietnamese leadership decides to fully disclose to the United States the information we know is available, progress on this issue will continue to be all too slow. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that recent indications of increased seriousness offer prospects for rapid progress. We are steadfastly committed to resolving the POW/MIA issue and obtaining answers. Our missing citizens, as well as their families and friends, deserve no less. ☆

*Carl W. Ford is principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs and deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia and Pacific Affairs. He is the keynote speaker for the AMVETS 47th National Convention this August in Louisville, Ky. (below).*

## WITH EQUAL CONCERN

Four resolutions dealing with the POW/MIA issue will be considered at the AMVETS 47th National Convention. They are—

**Resolution 76.** *America's Prisoners of War and Missing in Action* urges the federal government to increase activity to secure the release of any POWs still alive in Southeast Asia or the return of any remains.

**Resolution 77.** *Concerning the Korean War MIA Issue* urges the government to resolve the issue of unrepatriated remains of Americans listed as missing in action from the Korean War.

**Resolution 80.** *Reinvestigate the POW/MIA Controversy* recommends that Congress conduct a full and complete hearing into the POW/MIA controversy.

**Resolution 84.** *Support Presidential Envoy for POW/MIAs* continues to support the U.S. Special presidential emissary to Vietnam and his mission to satisfactorily resolve the issue.

All four come under the jurisdiction of the AMVETS National Defense and Foreign Relations Committee.

# IN THE RUNNING

## For National Commander



**James Singler.** Currently serving his second term as first vice commander for membership, Jim was commander of Post 17 (*Sandusky, Ohio*) and department commander (1971-73). The U.S. Army veteran also served as area vice commander and was president of the state service foundation. In addition to serving on many national committees, he was a trustee of the National Service Foundation from 1979 to 1985 and received the Silver Helmet AMVET of the Year Award.



## For National Judge Advocate



**Arthur W. Klingel, Jr.** Art presently serves as national judge advocate, a position he has held since 1988. He served as commander of Post 898 (*Massapequa, N.Y.*) for 2 years and as its judge advocate. Other positions include those of department commander (1976-77) and judge advocate (since 1975), commander of National District I (1983-84) and national inspector general (1984-85). The U.S. Navy vet was chairman of the state service foundation in 1988.



## For National Provost Marshal



**Ed Jones.** Ed currently serves as national provost marshal and as commander of the Department of North Carolina. He is a member of Post 635 (*Raleigh, N.C.*) and previously served as department first vice commander. A U.S. Navy veteran of World War II, he held the office of deputy national provost marshal for 2 years and served as department provost marshal for 5 years, as well as being a VAVS representative.

## For First Vice Commander



**James Kenney.** Jim has been a member of AMVETS since 1967 and has held a variety of positions at all levels of the organization. A U.S. Air Force veteran, he was commander of Post 19 (*East Islip, N.Y.*) from 1970 to 1975, and continues to serve on its board of trustees. He also served as department commander (1978-79), NECman from 1982 to 1988 and commander of National District I (1989-90). At present, he is serving as second vice commander for programs.



## For National Finance Officer



**Harold F. Slawson.** A life member of Post 74 (*Columbia, S.C.*), Harold now serves as National Finance Officer. Prior to this, the 9-year U.S. Marine veteran was active on several other national committees and served as alternate NECman (1987-89) and as commander of National District III (1989-90). His other positions have included that of department executive director and finance officer as well as post commander.



## For NSF Board of Trustees



**Robert L. Wilbraham.** Bob currently serves as president of the National Service Foundation's Board of Trustees. A life member of Post 109 (*Mentor-on-the-Lake, Ohio*) where he has held nearly every position, he has also served as department commander and on numerous committees. Other positions held by the U.S. Marine Corps veteran include that of National District IV commander and national vice commander for membership and programs. He is a past national commander (1983-84) and has served on various national committees.

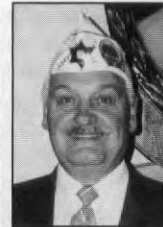
## For Second Vice Commander



**Donald M. Hearon.** Don is a life member of Post 17 (*Dallas, Tex.*), where he has held a variety of positions. The U.S. Marine Corps veteran was appointed state adjutant/executive director in 1979, a position he held until elected NECman in 1991. He served as commander of National District V in 1988 and again in 1989. In addition to serving on numerous national committees, he was named Texas AMVET of the Year in 1981.



## For Second Vice Commander



**Frank J. Krzesowik.** Frank has held all post-level offices, serving three terms as commander of Post 45 (*Detroit, Mich.*). Within the Department of Michigan, he has served as judge advocate (1984-85), second vice commander (1985-86), senior vice commander (1986-87) and state commander (1987-88). The U.S. Army veteran also has been active on a number of national committees, including the NEC (1988-90) and the National Finance Committee (1989).



## For Second Vice Commander



**William Stys.** Bill is a life member of Post 14 (*Milwaukee, Wis.*), where he held numerous offices and was elected commander for 4 years. In addition to serving as vice commander of membership at the department and district levels, he served as state commander and was elected commander of National District IV (1989-90). The U.S. Army/Navy vet is active on various national committees and is a VAVS representative at Zablocki VAMC.

# KEEPING POSTED

**DANNY DEVINE**

## **PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATES**

To honor the memory of honorably discharged, deceased veterans, a certificate is prepared by the Department of Veterans Affairs and signed by the president. Eligible recipients include the next of kin, other relatives or friends; certificates may be awarded to more than one eligible recipient. Those wishing to receive a certificate may apply in person or mail their request to any VA Regional Office. Applicants must provide proof of honorable service. For more information, write: Director, National Cemetery System (42F), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420.

## **SBA AWARD NOMINATIONS**

Award nominations are now being accepted in 12 categories -- including veteran small business advocate of the year. Nomination packages can be obtained at the nearest Small Business Administration district office, completed forms must be postmarked and returned by Nov. 5, 1991.

## **VA BARRIER ELIMINATION**

VA asks for your help in eliminating remaining barriers to the disabled at its 342 facilities nationwide. Report access obstacles by sending the facility's name and address together with a brief description of the barrier to: Tom Deniston, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.

## **RETURN TO KOREA**

A Korea Revisit Program for Korean veterans of all services is being sponsored by a consortium of the International Korean War Association, Korean Council Navy League and the United Nations Korean War Allies Association. The group will depart for the 7-day trip on September 30. Members are responsible for their air fare. Contact: Arthur Manger, CDR, USN(RET), 1600 Michael Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

## **YOUNG VETERANS ALLIANCE**

An association of Veterans of Underage Military Service has been formed to record stories of veterans joining the service before they were 17 years of age. Contacts will remain confidential. For more information, write: Allan Stover, Veterans of Underage Military Service, 3444 Walker Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21042.

## **BOOST FROM AGRICULTURE**

Low income military families may be eligible for food stamps, a situation that became very clear during Operation Desert Storm. A family of four with a gross monthly income of less than \$1,376, for example, may apply for assistance. Service centers such as food stamp offices, departments of human services or social services may be found under state or local government listings. Previous Government Accounting Office estimates indicated some 3-4,000 military households were using food stamps and that number is expected to increase.

## **NATIVE AMERICANS MEMORIAL**

Fund-raising efforts are underway for the first national memorial to Native American veterans. The 9-foot bronze statue is to be unveiled and dedicated on Memorial Day Weekend in 1992. Donations may be made to: Emily Webb, The Warrior Project, Department of General Services, The Hoover Building, Level "A," Des Moines, Iowa 50319.

## **KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL**

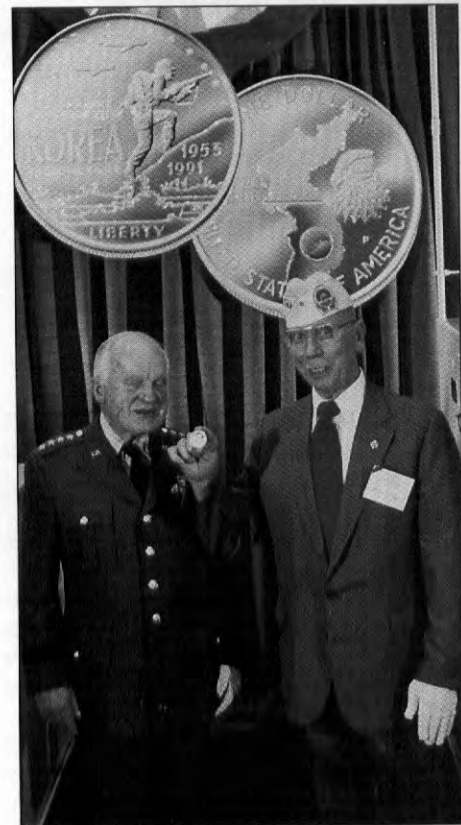
The Korean War Memorial continues to need support. See coin ad on page 17 or send your tax-deductible contribution to: Korean War Veterans Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 2372, Washington, DC 20013-2372.

# FOCUS ON AMVETS



(Clockwise from below) **Saved Painting.** Tennessee posts raised \$2,000 to save this rendition of the Iwo Jima flag raising painted in 1953 on the wall of a torn down VA hospital. **Newspapers Educate.** Post 10 in Lawton, Okla., sends students newspapers to help them learn to read. **High Honors.** John Mahan, Massachusetts district commander, congratulates Christine Hart on her reception of a R.O.T.C. award. **Wreath Laying.** Auxiliary President Nita Cornell and PNC Dante Spagnolo pay their respects at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. **Welcome Home.** General and Mrs. Norman Schwarzkopf join Medal of Honor recipient Charles MacGillivray, an AMVET life member, and his wife at homecoming celebration.





(Clockwise from left) **Volunteer Award.** VAVS representative Ray Walton is given an award for having volunteered 6,000 hours. **Top Cadet.** Chris Farr receives an AMVETS R.O.T.C. award from Department of California member Roger Gregory. **First Strike.** AMVETS National First Vice Commander James Singler and Gen. Richard Stilwell strike a Korean War Memorial Silver Dollar Coin at the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia. **Victory Celebration.** Four Desert Storm marines team up with AMVETS for a parade in Pleasanton, Calif. **Parking Test.** Pat Brett, commander of Post 103 in Hopewood, Pa., grades a participant in Drivers Excellence Program. **Special Session.** National Commander Brown poses with President Bush during a meeting at the White House, at which time the commander presented the president with a talking paper on homeless veterans, the VA budget and the need for a national veterans employment policy.

While the flurry of legislation relating to Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm has slowed down, the veteran's arena on Capitol Hill remains very active. Whether the issue be the Department of Veterans Affairs FY92 appropriations, the establishment of a World War II memorial in Washington, D.C., or the theft of drugs at VA medical facilities, we--as an organization--have been called on to voice our views. And on almost every occasion, AMVETS has responded.

On 11 occasions in the past three months, representatives from the AMVETS National Legislative Department have appeared in front of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and--in a rare departure for any veterans service organization--the House Judiciary Committee. And on those occasions where we were not able to testify in person, we submitted testimony for inclusion in The Congressional Record. As this issue of The National AMVET goes to press, there are a number of legislative initiatives pending in which AMVETS has been actively involved. Some of these initiatives are described below.

### The DIC Program

After many years of lobbying by veterans organizations, Congress has agreed to formally review the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program with specific regard to making the program more equitable for all surviving spouses and dependents of deceased military members and veterans. In testimony before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, AMVETS urged Congress to formulate a more suitable DIC program and--as a minimum--raise the rates for widows and children of lower-ranking enlisted personnel. The major obstacle in modifying the DIC program continues to be the potential cost of making this pro-

gram more equitable--over \$400 million by some estimates. The Senate has postponed any hearings on the matter until the General Accounting Office can report back on the estimated costs involved, but it is anticipated that any DIC modification will not be accomplished during this session of Congress.

### Aid For The Troops

Currently, the Department of Defense separates from military service approximately 300,000 men and women every year. Over the next five years, this number could increase by more than 90,000 and it is expected that many of these people will be separated involuntarily. Because of these reductions, AMVETS presented testimony in support of a well-organized, comprehensive and workable program of transition assistance. The program would offer these veterans benefits briefings and training in resume "banking" and resume writing. The Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense would conduct this program. AMVETS has expressed its concern to Congress that effective implementation of transition assistance may be held up by "turf battles" between these three departments.

### Veterans Program Funds

AMVETS has been extremely active in the deliberations of both the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies (those subcommittees that provide the annual operating funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs). By testifying in front of committees, meeting with senators and representatives and working with other veterans organizations, AMVETS played a key role in the granting of an appropriation by the House and Senate that will allow VA to continue operations under difficult fiscal realities.



## THE RIGHT BALANCE

**James Singler**  
**National First Vice**  
**Commander for Membership**

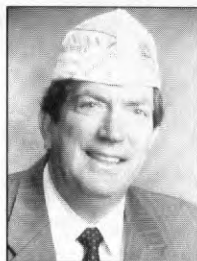
I believe that life has four areas that require balance: family, work, leisure, and community. Family is my first priority and it should be yours as well. Family members have always been there for me with encouragement and support and they have earned the right to be number one. The right attitude and an open mind helps considerably.

We can all appreciate the work we must do to ensure that our basic needs for food, clothing and shelter are met. We put in 8 or more hours a day, 5 days a week and are under pressure to meet deadlines and quotas. Business is serious and can cause stress but with planning, it can bring good fortune.

As important as it is to earn a living, I continually remind myself of the need to schedule leisure and exercise time—even though it sounds selfish. It helps to avoid burnout and keeps me mentally and physically in shape.

I have been blessed with a wonderful, loving wife and family. Life has been good and as I reflect on my accomplishments, I am thankful to have had the opportunity to be an AMVET member. I firmly believe in giving back to the community and through AMVETS I have been able to funnel my energies and desires into doing something good for others. I ensure that AMVETS is in my plan because it offers the structured programs I believe in. And it provides a tremendous advantage over attempting to do everything myself.

A well-conceived plan committed to writing can be a valuable tool to keep you on the right track. I encourage everyone to have a plan because as Murphy says, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else, or you won't know when you have arrived."



## ENTRIES SHOW COMMITMENT

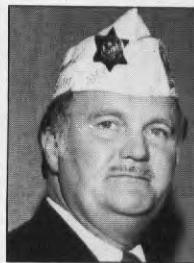
**James Kenney**  
**National Second Vice**  
**Commander for Programs**

With the deadline for entries for the National Awards Program just past us, I am encouraged by the number and the quality of this year's submissions. It is obvious that

many posts and departments have put a lot of time and effort into these projects.

It is also satisfying to see the number of essays and posters that have come in for the Americanism contests. The spirited poster work done by our children is both heartening and a pleasure to review, while the essays are poignant reminders that not all of today's youth are illiterate. The selection of winners in all categories will prove a difficult task this year.

I want to also note that PNC Ted Leszkiewicz received an invitation to present the A.A.D.A.A. program to a seminar sponsored by the Veterans Against Drugs coalition in Quantico, Va., in mid-July. This is further proof that the program is a viable and respected one around the country.



## FUNDING FOR OUR PROGRAMS

**Robert L. Wilbraham, PNC**  
**President, AMVETS**  
**National Service Foundation**

Since its beginnings, the AMVETS National Service Foundation has developed and supported numerous programs in the name of the national AMVETS organization. Today, in these financially difficult times, the foundation's commitment to fund these programs becomes even more important. . . and more difficult. Basically, the foundation uses four methods of fund-raising; direct mail, thrift stores, bequests and independent grants. I'd like to use this month's column to briefly address our thrift-store operation.

An integral part of our overall fund-raising program, the AMVETS thrift-store operation has been growing over the past several years and is responsible for an increasingly large share of the foundation's revenue. The National Service Foundation owns nine stores. In comparison, the foundation has thrift stores that are owned and operated by private individuals who share a percentage of their profits with AMVETS. Our 10 owner/operators have a total of 41 stores in 21 states. All 50 stores employ more than 2,000 people and supply good pre-owned clothing, appliances and furniture at reasonable cost.

The foundation thrift stores not only constitute a source of funds for ongoing veterans service programs but also provide employment for residents of the community and a much-needed service to surrounding communities. It is in a large part due to these monies that the foundation can sponsor outstanding programs such as VAVS and the Freedoms Foundation youth seminar and can offer a grant of more than \$600,000 to the national AMVETS organization.

Later this month, the foundation will be closing our

Brockton, Mass., store and opening a new one in Brighton. We're looking forward to this newest AMVET thrift store becoming a successful enterprise that will assist not only the National Service Foundation but also the Department of Massachusetts.

Such partnerships exist successfully throughout all the states in which AMVETS has thrift stores, regardless of whether they are owned by the foundation or are owner/operator stores. This long and successful practice allows the host department to develop and expand its own local service programs.



## THE FORGOTTEN ONES

**Nita I. Cornell**  
National President  
AMVETS Auxiliary

Having recently returned from a trip to the Far East, I would like to share two experiences. Those of you who served in Korea should never doubt the value of your service—you need only compare the bleak existence of those in the North to the republic prospering in the South.

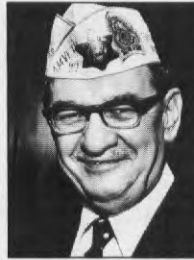
Our party was privileged to visit Camp Bonifas for an informative briefing given by Joint Security Area personnel. Lt. Col. Glen A. Scott, commander of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 2nd Infantry Division, accompanied us to the firebase and the demilitarized zone. North Korean guards were clearly visible observing the actions of all visitors. We also toured Guard Post Ouellette.

Each soldier briefly outlined the duties he performed. These young men, I truly believe, are the "forgotten ones." Their tour of duty lasts 90 days at a time and some have more than one. Each is highly qualified, physically as well as mentally, and willingly performs a very repetitious task. Each understands the importance of being the "watch dog" over the North, being surrounded on three sides by the North Koreans—Freedom Village, Propaganda Village and a North Korean outpost.

The dedication of the 2nd Infantry Division troops certainly has earned them the respect and admiration of all who have been privileged to meet them.

During a briefing at the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) at Camp H.M. Smith, I learned that today nearly 150 full-time civilian and military personnel around the world are dedicated solely to the POW/MIA issue (*page 8*)—one that is a high priority to AMVETS.

These personnel plan and direct the recovery operations and investigations in Laos and Vietnam. Through their efforts, our POW/MIAs will not become the "forgotten ones."



## ON THE RIGHT TRACK

**Ted Leszkiewicz, PNC**  
Chairman, Compulsive  
Disease Committee

From the feedback we're getting, our A.A.D.A.A. (AMVETS Against Drug/Alcohol Abuse) program is on the right track as a community, parent and youth support and awareness program. We have taken the right step in going into the schools from K-1 through high school and providing incentive to reach out to those who are interested in helping each other. The community, parents and youth must mobilize all their efforts, as the White House has mentioned, to fight this problem at the local level down to the neighborhood block clubs. They all know what's going on and what needs to be done.

In an effort to make this a drug-free America, AMVETS has emerged as the new leader among all veterans organizations. We have been invited to conduct a "learning" seminar in November on the West Coast to teach and share what can be done to help this world crisis. Meanwhile, Governor Wilson of California has recognized our A.A.D.A.A. program as a comprehensive community action program and perhaps the most effective tool we have in reducing alcohol and other drug abuse. He has also requested that our A.A.D.A.A. guidelines be reprinted and included in the mailings made by state legislators to their constituents. This promises more publicity for our cause at a minimum cost absorbed by the California State Service Foundation and the AMVETS Department of California. Thanks, Joe Kolano, for joining our winning team.

But much work still needs to be done. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates, for example, that 2.9 million Americans are using cocaine. Approximately 1,600 Cocaine Anonymous meetings are held daily, with nearly 60,000 members helping each other in 46 states and Canada.

Look at what happened to celebrities such as Kerri Miller after five years of cocaine, alcohol, and valium use. She was at absolute bottom until she attended a Cocaine Anonymous meeting that turned her life around.

Tragically, that was not the case with the Dallas Cowboys' Larry Bethea. He was a role model and thought nothing could stop him until coke crept up on him and he got "hooked". A few years later, Bethea ended his life.

Then there was David Thompson who got \$2 million to sign with the Denver Nuggets. In no time alcohol and drugs became his new team and he was \$2.2 million in debt.

The same happened to Roman Gabriel and Carl Eller. Eller went through \$3 million before he woke up.

We are exploring the feasibility of several celebrities joining our committee to enhance our ongoing war on drugs.

*How many years can some people exist before they're allowed to be free.*

—Bob Dylan ("Blowin' in the Wind," 1962)

## GETTING TO THE HEART OF THINGS

**D**uring recent months, the Prisoners of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) issue has been the focus of considerable attention. Internationally, as previously reported to you, our State Department has submitted a four-step proposal leading to normalization of relations with Vietnam. Depending on who is reporting, this proposal has been neither rejected nor accepted but is under consideration. Of course, the POW/MIA issue is at the heart of this effort, together with resolving the Cambodian affair.

A new book, *Kiss the Boys Goodby*, has been released and Senators Jesse Helms and Charles Grassly have prepared an examination of U.S. policy toward POW/MIAs. A highly decorated Vietnam veteran who was chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency's Special Office of POW/MIAs, charged that the U.S. Government was abandoning our POW/MIAs and conducting a cover-up. Colonel Peck resigned his position in frustration, and as a career officer, figuratively fell on his sword as Secretary of Defense Cheney cited "an internal Pentagon inquiry" that found no foundation to support charges of impropriety, Mr. Cheney subsequently announced that "no further action is required in this case."

Hanoi has approved the opening of a temporary office, staffed by DOD personnel. This office is intended to facilitate joint U.S.-Vietnamese field investigation of possible MIA sites and to research Vietnamese archives. Various legislators hope to establish an independent office in Hanoi, staffed by private agencies, to augment the government office. The National League of Families opposes the establishment of such an office, regardless of the humanitarian intent. In voicing its opposition, a League spokesman said, "There is no responsible or viable substitute for government-to-government negotiations in utilization of the expertise of technical specialists in the Joint Casualty Resolution Center and the Central Identification Laboratory. It is the League's belief that only with such experience, effective results be achieved."

Flexing its lobbying muscle, big business has garnered congressional support to lift the economic embargo placed on Vietnam some 16 years ago. Vietnam is now seen as a ripe plum in the international marketplace and the competition is fierce to pluck it before the Japanese open up the

billion market. Meanwhile, the communists are attempting to lure countries who can provide "mutual benefits" through new emphasis on efficiency and productivity. The Vietnamese economy is reportedly in shambles and humanitarian aid tops the list.

In spite of the ongoing controversy, the fact still remains that a substantial number of Americans remain unaccounted for in IndoChina. The methods used to resolve the POW/MIA issue constitute a perplexing emotional minefield. The one constant is that the answers to our POW/MIA questions can only be found in Vietnam. Though the country has a transition of younger, more liberal leaders, it remains communist and repressive. Like its communist partners, it has a history of bartering POW/MIAs to achieve financial assistance and diplomatic recognition.

### "The United States must learn from its historical experiences"

The president and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney have reiterated the administration's position that the POW/MIA issue remains a high national priority and indicated that to think otherwise was outlandish. Mr. Cheney further indicated that the fullest possible accountability will be obtained, regardless of the international relationship with Vietnam and that if any American prisoners are still alive, the United States will bring them home.

The rate of progress achieved to date in resolving this issue does not necessarily reflect public commitment to the administration's position that the POW/MIA issue is "of highest national priority." The United States must learn from its historical experiences and not fall prey to diplomatic and economic bartering nor downplay the significance of resolving the POW/MIA issue. A snapshot of three alleged American MIAs was recently released to the media, adding further to the controversy that Americans are still captive in Indochina. The release of this photograph raises the question: Was Colonel Peck that far off base or is this just another cruel hoax?

With the passage of time and emphasis on international economy, have we reached a point where numbers mean more than the inventory? Are we approaching a point where the issue may be absorbed or balanced against international market competitiveness and economic instability? One shudders to think of the possibilities of international and political intrigue designed to place a painful period of American history into a closed file buried within the bowels of the Pentagon. Such a thought is outlandish yet Americans remain unaccounted for as the league prepares for its 23rd annual meeting. ☆



Robert L. Jones is AMVETS national executive director.

circumstances suggested imminent capture or death. The remainder involved air losses during which, the United States is convinced, crew members ejected alive over populated areas. It was agreed that the JCRC and its Vietnamese counterpart, the Vietnamese Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP), would focus discussions and Vietnamese unilateral efforts on these cases. As a result of General Vessey's mission, the Vietnamese resumed the technical-level dialogue and began to repatriate more remains.

A significant development occurred in 1988, when the Vietnamese allowed Americans to investigate discrepancy cases in Vietnam. In 13 intensive periods of field work, JCRC investigators have gone from one end of Vietnam to the other.

Most of the losses in Laos will probably be resolved through crash-site excavations or grave-site recovery efforts. The Laotian government permitted the first excavation of an American aircraft crash site in February 1985. Since then, there have been recovery operations at 13 crash sites. Recently, a JCRC team investigated two cases of Americans known to have been held as prisoners of war in the Sam Neua Cave area. Eyewitnesses provided new information about their fate. This precedent-setting opportunity to investigate cases of men known to have been held for a period of time was very important. The U.S. government hopes that a recent agreement will lead to a year-round approach and a quicker pace.

The situation in Cambodia has remained extremely complicated because of the difficult political situation there. Nevertheless, in August 1990, a JCRC team met with officials of the Vietnamese-backed government in Phnom Penh. Folders of case material concerning each American MIA in Cambodia have since been presented to them. The government in Phnom Penh has repatriated some remains, but they cannot be identified as American. In the meantime, until there is a comprehensive peace settlement in Cambodia and a legitimate government in power, the JCRC is not likely to have the opportunity to do the kind of work now underway in Laos and Vietnam.

Of course, the critical question about Americans missing in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia is whether any of them might still be alive and held against their will. The JCRC raised the question of live Americans at all recurring technical meetings with Vietnamese officials. JCRC interviewers give highest priority to reports of Americans having been seen alive in Southeast Asia. Most importantly, the field

investigations in Vietnam and those begun in Laos focus on individuals most likely to be the Americans held in those countries today.

During the past 34 months, the investigations have provided critical information about these men, even though it has not been proven that there are Americans either being held captive or living freely in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Two agencies playing a key role in all these efforts are the Defense Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory (*below*). Meanwhile, the men and women of the JCRC remain firmly committed to achieving the fullest accounting for their missing comrades. ☆



*Colonel Harvey is commander of the Joint Casualty Resolution Center. A Vietnam veteran and specialist in Southeast Asian affairs, he commanded the first U.S. field operations conducted in Laos and Vietnam since the war and has overseen the development of a technical-level dialogue with those two countries.*

## HANDLED WITH CARE

The process used by the Central Identification Laboratory (CIL) in Honolulu, Hawaii, to identify the remains of those returned is one of the Army's most specialized operations. The outline of it here may provide peace of mind to families of missing Americans.

Because the remains received by the CIL are frequently commingled, the first step in the identification process is to segregate them into separate and unique individuals. Once this is done, physical forensic anthropologists and a forensic odontologist examine each set of remains and document their findings in a series of charts, forms and special narrative statements. Radiographic and photographic equipment is used in which anthropological data can be obtained from the remains to determine age, race, sex, muscularity, handedness and height, as well as indications of pre-existing abnormalities or injuries.

While these procedures are going on, casualty-data analysts use existing intelligence information to identify casualties that could be associated with the remains. The possibilities of potential association are narrowed by using maps and computerized data to identify known incident or crash sites falling within an established radius of the reported recovery site of the remains. The files of all individuals known to be lost within that circle are then analyzed for available identifying data.

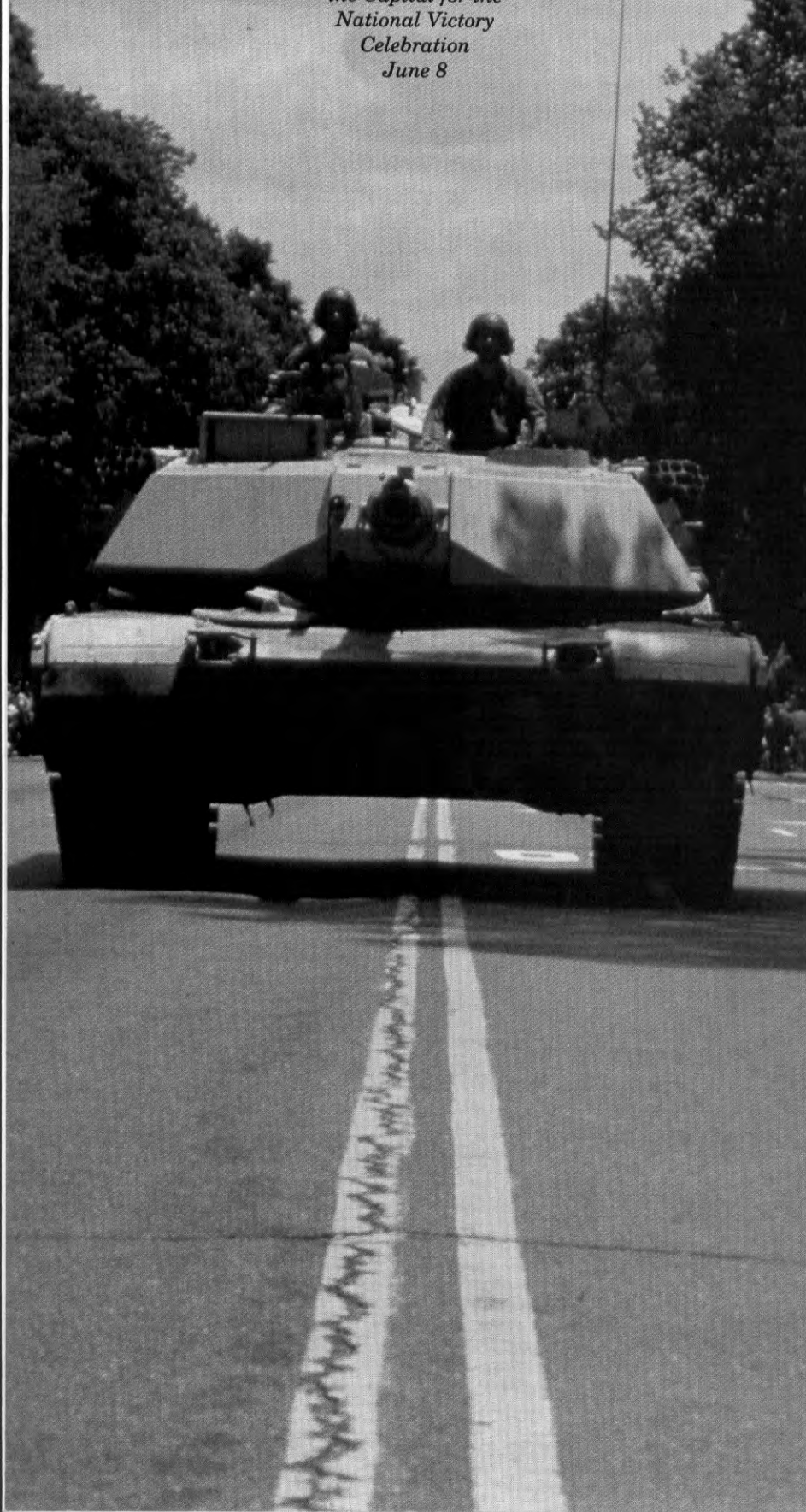
After thorough documentation of the comparison is completed, the CIL makes a recommendation that is reviewed by a team of professional consultants, normally consisting of two senior board-certified physical anthropologists and one senior board-certified forensic odontologist. If this recommendation for identification is concurred in, it is provided to the next of kin through the parent military service. At this point, the next of kin can solicit from an independent expert another opinion to be considered by the Army's team of consultants before a final decision is made.

After an identification has been approved, the remains depart Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, with full military honors, for the Air Force Mortuary at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., where they are held pending disposition instructions from the next of kin. If the CIL recommendation is disapproved, the case is referred back to the laboratory for further review.

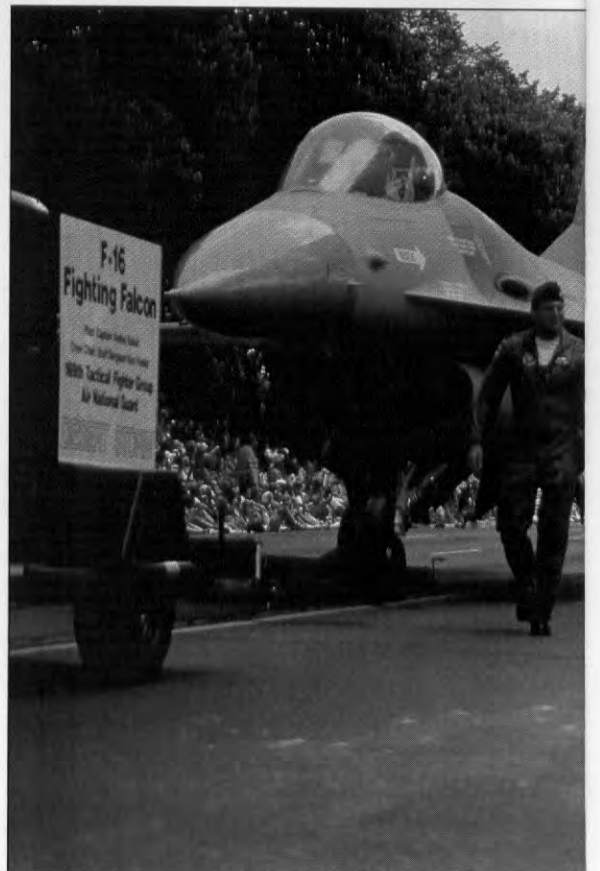
—Ralph E. Hall, PNC

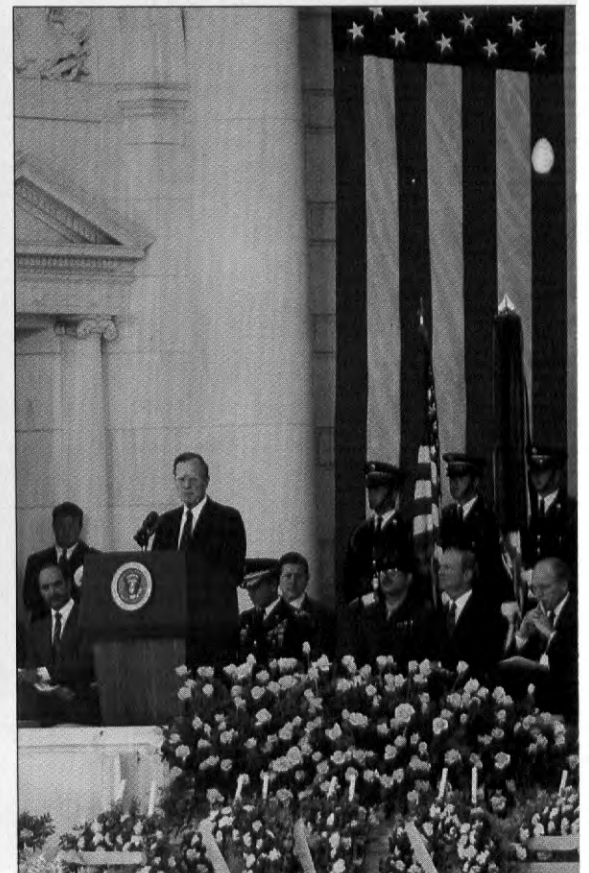
# TRIUMPHANT RETURN

*A grateful nation says "Thank You"  
to the troops of Desert Storm  
as thousands turn out in  
the Capital for the  
National Victory  
Celebration  
June 8*



PHOTOS BY TOM KOZAR







**Guadalcanal  
August 1944**

# A TASTE OF GLORY

*On July 5, 1942, U.S. intelligence intercepted a Japanese radio message ordering construction forces ashore at Guadalcanal—an atoll no larger than 100 miles long and 35 miles wide. Their orders were to build an airstrip so that Japanese planes in the Solomon islands could be positioned closer to Allied shipping lanes supplying New Zealand and Australia.*

*Meanwhile, the largest Marine unit ever assembled under one command had set sail from New Zealand. The First Marine Division, activated just six months earlier at New River, N.C., had been tasked to recover Guadalcanal. Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift, division commander, had been given just 6 weeks to train up his troops—many of them recruits fresh out of boot camp. Many of the senior officers and enlisted men were reservists or veterans of the 1925 Nicaraguan campaign and it was not*



*uncommon to also see an occasional World War I veteran.*

*By August 7, Naval Task Force 61 was steaming toward the Solomons to launch the first American land offensive in the Pacific. Fifteen transports headed for Guadalcanal, while eight more sailed toward nearby Tulagi, Tanambogo and Gavutu with some 19,000 U.S. Marines.*

*Most Americans could not find Guadalcanal on a map when the division handed the Japanese their first land defeat, but the spirit of Guadalcanal became a rallying point for victory in the Pacific. This is the story of Sgt. Michael Capraro of Utica, N.Y., a Marine in Transport Group X-Ray preparing for Operation Watchtower—derisively dubbed Operation Shoestring by the Marines—and an amphibious assault on the tiny coral island's shore, codenamed Red Beach.*

COURTESY MARINE CORPS MUSEUM

COL DONALD DICKSON, USMCR, RET.



**Unlike the contested landing across the channel on Tulagi, your landing on Guadalcanal went unchallenged. What were your first moments on the island like?**

We were an assault battalion and we were given an aerial photograph showing a patch that was obviously a cleared field. But it turned out to be kunai grass, which is like elephant grass and it's formidable. You can't even burn it. We were given an azimuth of 260 degrees. You couldn't take a compass reading, because the grass was so high and the jungle was so thick.

**Didn't the Navy bomb all that out?**

No. Never believe that about any off-shore shelling. We were to attack an objective called the "Grassy Knoll," which turned out later to be Mt. Austen, but we never made it. We went ashore wielding machetes trying to take a heading, trying to take a bearing. We couldn't see anything, horizons were cut off by the coconut trees and we settled into a perimeter defense.

**Six Marines eventually earned the Medal of Honor for heroism during the campaign. What did the division expect when you landed on the island?**

First of all, we were all very green. I was a sergeant when we went ashore August 7. We'd been aboard ship pretty close to 60 days at that time and we were just anxious to get off. We had no appreciation of the terrain, the enemy, or the whole concept of war. I joined for adventure and travel and all of a sudden we got war. We had a young second lieutenant who had been promoted from the ranks. The night before, while we were on the transport *The George Elliott*—which was later sunk with all our gear still on it—he gave us a pep talk. He meant well, but

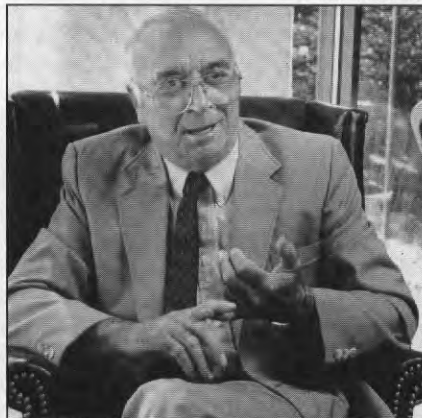
*"Night Attack—Bloody Ridge" (opposite) was completed by Colonel Dickson after the war, when he was with Leatherneck magazine. A major when he landed on Guadalcanal as the regimental adjutant of the 5th Marines, he sketched many scenes such as "For a Pal" (page 27) and had his work later featured in Life magazine. The 1st Division patch designed by Col. Merrill Twining, operations officer for General Vandergrift, was the first one approved during World War II. Capraro, who joined the Marines in 1940, was later recalled to active duty during the Korean War (lower right).*

he was overly dramatic when he said, "Tomorrow, we'll face the enemy and remember, you've got to go out there and kill, kill, kill." I looked around at some of my senior noncoms and they just blanched a little. We knew what the hell we had to do; we didn't need this Knute Rockne approach.

**Weren't many of the division's young officers straight from Officer Candidate School, with very little experience?**

I think they all went to school on Guadalcanal. It was a school for so many of the leaders that the Corps

DAY WALTERS



produced during the war. Basically, this old breed carried the load throughout World War II and into Korea.

**Major naval battles were taking place in Sealark Channel—often called Ironbottom Bay because of the amount of shipping sunk. Dog fights were fought overhead, while the "leg" Marines were engaging the enemy almost daily. How would you describe this turmoil?**

On Guadalcanal, there was the one word to describe our situation for at least 4 or 5 months: precarious. We just didn't know what was going to happen next. One thing about any combat situation is you never have the big picture. I'd visit the bivouac areas where the platoon leaders knew me as the intelligence officer and they all presumed that I was privy to what was going on. So whenever I would visit, they would ask what "the latest scoop" was. I didn't have any, but I was inclined to pick some of it up from them.

**How did you get into intelligence?**

I became proficient in map reading. It's very important to be able to read a map and know where you're going and how to get back. I was the head of the section in 2nd Battalion, 1st Regiment, 1st Marine Division. Because of the job I did, I was promoted to platoon sergeant and then they handed me a commission in November, just about the time that we left and headed for Australia to recover. Later, I was promoted to captain at the age of 20 or 21.

**Your first major confrontation with the Japanese came at what the Americans called "Alligator Creek"—The Tenaru River—against 900 crack troops commanded by Col. Kiyono Ichiki. What happened there that earned it the name "Hell's Point?"**

It was the night of the 21st [August], and we had the grunts out around the perimeter, stringing barbed wire and hanging chow cans on it. We knew that when those things started rattling in the middle of the night, that was it.

**What happened next?**

About two in the morning, the rattling started and then everything opened up; all the machineguns were on pre-



fixed fire. We fired as they came across a sand spit that was about 50 feet long and about 20 feet wide. Colonel Pollock—the man who gave me my commission—was so calm, walking around and directing things, looking, asking questions, stopping to encourage this one man or that one. In my mind, he was a leader, a professional soldier. He was unafraid and exposing himself to fire. That, to me, was leadership, not that young novice aboard the *Elliott* who said “kill, kill.” The thing that stood out that night was an appreciation for Marine Corps leadership as set by its officers, noncoms and men.

**It's been estimated that 35-51,000 Japanese soldiers died on the 'Canal from the time you landed until the island was declared secure on Feb. 9, 1943. What were your impressions of the enemy that night?** We'd been led to believe they were small, puny people with bad eyesight. What I saw were well-built, muscled athletes. These were well-conditioned, well-fed, well-disciplined, determined,

and fanatic soldiers. When they attacked, it was like watching a football game. They'd try to charge through the center of the line and then huddle up and try again. They were just being ripped apart and it was obvious by about 10 [a.m.] that we had stopped them.

**After the battle at Alligator Creek—which cost 34 Marines their lives while 75 others were wounded—what were your battalion's responsibilities?**

Patrolling. Everyday I'd lead 200 men out beyond our line, because it's essential that you put out your antenna. We were the antenna, patrolling 10, 15 miles a day in swamp water up to our chests.

**On a swampy island infested with rats and leeches, what presented the greatest threat to the Marines beside the Japanese?**

First, hunger and then malaria. We experienced everything on Guadalcanal, but I was hungry most of the time. You only got two meals a day. My hunger was so strong that it was causing hallucinations. On the morning of the 21st, we saw this carnage, where the Japanese were literally shredded by our Tincan (off-shore naval destroyer) fire, antitank guns and mortars, and machinegun fire. I saw the burned thigh of a Japanese soldier and, so help me, I thought it was a ham. That kind of hallucination made it just total all-out war for us. Food was a real problem and we lived off the Japanese food left behind. We once uncovered a Japanese cache with dried powder and we thought it was powdered eggs. Well, we carted the stuff off and on the way back, it turned out that it was tooth powder.

**Some 5,600 additional Marine casualties were from the effects of malaria and other jungle maladies. What were the effects of these diseases on you?**

We had the malaria and that was for real, though I didn't recognize it until I got off the 'Canal. I was very thin—we had dysentery—and weighed about 100 lbs in late November after being about 145 when I got there.

**Adm. Frank Fletcher once said,**

**“After a battle is over people talk a lot about how decisions were methodically reached, but actually there's always a hell of a lot of groping around.” Did you encounter situations where you found yourself groping?**

I'll never forget; once we came to a ridge and I halted the company. I climbed the ridge, hand-over-hand, to the top, then raised my head...smack into the face of a Japanese soldier. He was as shocked as I was; he fell back and I fell back, and I rolled down the hill. That was typical of patrols. I was even ambushed once. I know this sounds corny, but I felt God was watching over me. After the first night when I saw how death can strike at any time, I just relaxed and said there was nothing that I could do; I'm in God's hands.

**Adm. “Bull” Halsey said “The coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the Pacific.” What was it like working with the native scouts.**

I was working with the locals—the “fuzzy wuzzies,” as the Aussies called them—and picked up pidgin English from them. They taught me how to smell the Japanese in the jungle. The Japanese would throw off a distinct body odor from their diets, and I guess they could smell us. Certainly, the fuzzy wuzzies could smell both of us and they could make the distinction. While I was with them, I learned how to move through the jungle without making any noise and how to survive in the swamp water.

**How did you pass the time when you weren't patrolling?**

There was a lot of card playing going on. I sent money home in envelopes stuffed with \$1 bills, because my sister was going to college. We had one man in H Company from Pittsburgh who was a legend. He was a professional gambler and, when he went ashore, he had \$3,000 in a sock tied to his belt. He hired a bodyguard, a BAR man, whose job was to keep him alive. I just buried my first sergeant, Francis Patrick “Paddy” McGrath, not too long ago in Arlington and I had taken \$100 from him during the air raids on the 'Canal. He liked to come into my foxhole and we would sit there playing blackjack. At his grave site, I promised that I'd

pay him back his 100 bucks and sent a check to the 1st Marine Division scholarship fund in his name.

**You mentioned the recent war in the Middle East and compared it with the taking of the island. How were these battles different?**

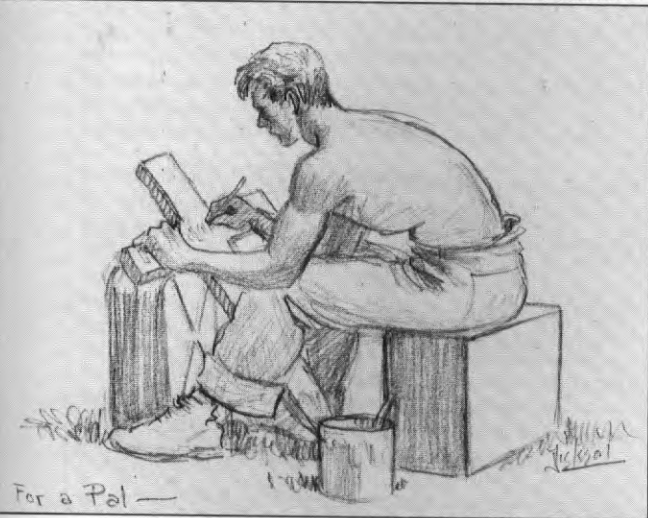
When you talk of the "mother of all battles," I think of the maturing, the feeling of responsibility and the full impact of what a war is. It means people are going to get killed. The war there in Iraq was so short that they might not have had the full impact. Then I remember the lack of food, the malaria, the air raids. Every night we were shelled by destroyers, cruisers, battleships and submarines. It was the mother of all battles. I think that's

Not how I was going to cope with it, but how would my mother cope. That was the meaning of death to a fighting man. Not only that you get killed, but you get killed in some far-off place that has no meaning to anybody. I was up there for 15 days, and when I walked out, it was with the pride you feel when you've given all that you've got, surmounting incredible odds for a cause that you believe in. This is what I call glory. I had that same feeling on Guadalcanal.

**Have you wanted to return to the 'Canal since you left?**

I have no desire to go back anywhere. I'm 69 years old and I've seen a lot. But now I don't think I'm really relevant anymore. I'm part of the vanishing

COL DONALD DICKSON, USMCR, RET.



COURTESY MARINE CORPS MUSEUM

**"It's always going to take. . .the blood of grunts, the sweat of grunts and the fear of grunts."**

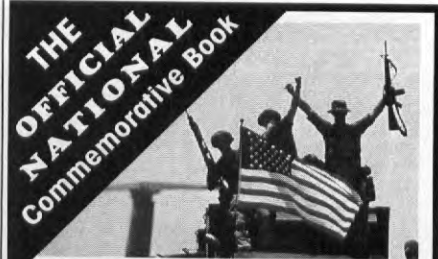
the first battle where we had the whole shooting works thrown at us.

**You were later recalled to active duty and served in Korea, landing at Inchon and getting trapped at the Chosin Reservoir. What went through your mind as the Chinese closed in?**

I realized what the meaning of death was when the Chinese came and caught us by surprise. We were surrounded by 300,000 of them and I decided I'd make my peace with the Lord. I kept thinking that, here I am in a wasteland, 25 below zero with all those Chinese out there who were going to trample all over me and leave my remains out there. I thought "how was my mother going to cope with that."

breed, so it's hard to go back and figure out what all that bloodletting was all about. I believe, down deep in my heart, I'm a pacifist. I just hate to see American blood spilled anywhere. This whole business about war—bombs and all that—bothers me, because the primitive warrior can dig down into the ground and survive all of these things. And it's always going to take Americans—the blood of grunts, the sweat of grunts and the fear of grunts—to take him out. ☆

*Capraro left the Marines as a major and later retired from the CIA. A real estate broker who currently resides in Virginia, he was interviewed by Danny Devine, national programs director.*



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Because publication of the spring issue was delayed, The National AMVET regrets that our readers were not able to take advantage of the special offer related to the Korean War Memorial coin, advertised in that issue on page 27.

# Remember Them.

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